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# Castellum

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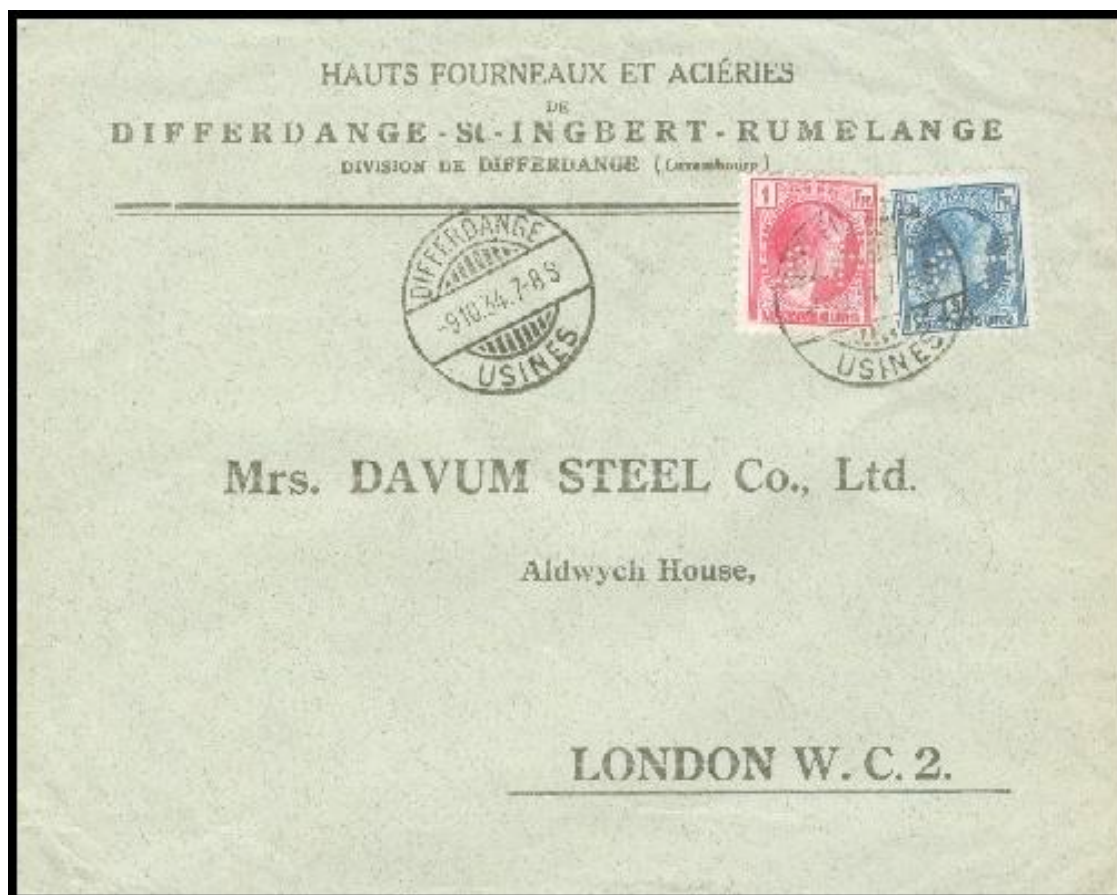
**June 2004**

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## President's Message

by Gary Little

This month we have a very interesting article from Allan Wichelman on the relative scarcity of the commercial perfin stamps of Luxembourg. These stamps are particularly rare on cover. See the example below, a 1934 cover franked with two stamps with "Ha" perfins. This illustrates proper commercial usage on a preprinted envelope of the Hadir steel mill and postmarked Differdange Usines. This cover sold recently on eBay for \$64.



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## The Relative Scarcity of Luxembourg's Commercial Perfins

by Allan F. Wichelman

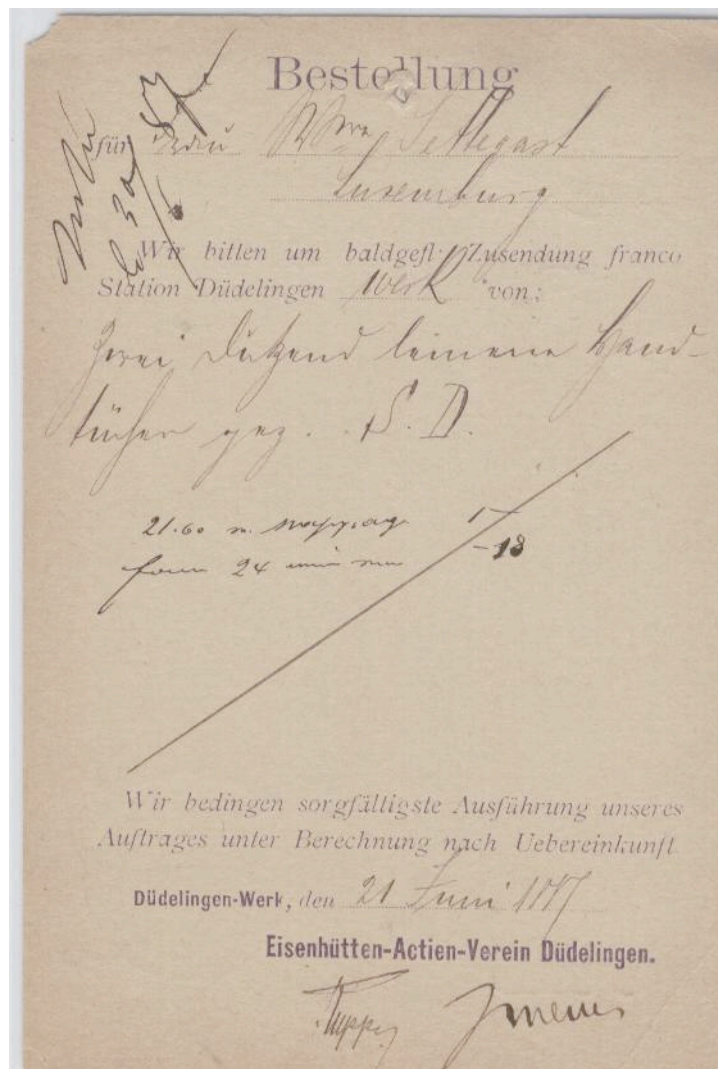
With classical material becoming increasingly elusive and expensive, many collectors today actively pursue perfins, precancels, postal stationery, official postal seals, revenue stamps and stamped paper, and other Cinderella items instead. These collectables put less strain on a philatelic budget and portend a chance to discover items that are rare, often unlisted or unreported, and about which much research remains to be done. Happily, with the advent of the Internet and auction venues such as eBay, material of this sort increasingly is coming into the philatelic marketplace, as is information about it.

A “*perfin*” is a stamp (or postal stationery item) that has been *perforated* with *initials* or other *insignia*. Perfinned postage stamps were first used commercially in England in 1868. At that time, Joseph Sloper obtained permission from the General Post Office to use a pin perforating machine that he had developed to perforate initials for his clients on their postage stamps. Businesses were losing revenue from theft of company postage stamps. Since stamps could be easily stolen and resold, dishonest employees found them an attractive target for theft. With the proper owner's initials perforated through the stamp design, however, it became easier to determine if stamps had been improperly used. Sir Henry Bessemer had proposed a similar technique in 1832 for preventing revenue stamp fraud, but it was not adopted.

Sloper's idea caught on throughout the British Commonwealth, and perfins soon appeared in other European countries as well, including Luxembourg. In 1991, the Cercle d'Études de la Fédération des Sociétés Philatéliques du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg published a listing of Luxembourg perfins<sup>1</sup> in which they attempted to identify the user and period of use of each known perfin pattern. An updated listing was published as a catalog in 1995; subsequently, in 2002, a much more detailed, meticulously documented 65-page, second edition of the catalog appeared under the title *Catalogue des Timbres Perforés Luxembourgeois: Katalog der Lochungen in Marken Luxemburgs*.<sup>2</sup>

This indispensable, scholarly work cites a grand-ducal arrêté of August 21, 1907, that authorized the use of perfins. However, the FSPL notes that some Luxembourg companies used perfins long before that date, with the first being the Stahlwerk Düdelingen. The earliest recorded use of its S.D. perfin is on a 10-centime Allegory definitive postmarked Dudelage, July 23, 1891. Based on the text of the postcard shown below, which appears to have been posted by the Stahlwerk on June 21, 1887, to order its S.D. perforator, the earliest possible date of use probably can be moved back to sometime in 1887. Werling, Lambert & Cie was another early user. Its W.L. perfins date from 1892.





Luxembourg perfins still turn up in old collections, dealer stocks, and just about any place older Luxembourg stamps can be found. Many collectors used to discard perfins because they thought the punched holes damaged the stamp. The perfins that were saved were usually soaked from envelopes and placed in albums or stock books. Needless to say, covers as a consequence are scarce. I have collected Luxembourg perfins over the past 40 years, mostly finding one or a few at a time. My album pages and stock books now contain nearly 800 Luxembourg perfins, including about 25 on covers and postcards. Consequently, I am often asked how scarce (or how common) a particular Luxembourg perfin is. In Table 1, below, I have classified Luxembourg perfins by relative scarcity into three groups, labeled "A," "B" and "C", based on a count of the number of each perfin design that I've found over the forty-year period. I have not included four foreign company perfins used on Luxembourg stamps (which were probably provided on addressed return envelopes and postcards sent to customers in Luxembourg) since these rare perfins as "non-Luxembourg commercial perfins," even though they are occasionally found on Luxembourg stamps. They are included in the listing (Table 2) for the sake of completeness as the FSPL catalog has documented their existence. I also have not included four other obscure perfins listed by the FSPL but about which almost nothing is known, and whose legitimacy in my view remains to be established. I have, however, included the two perfins used by the Luxembourg Prison, since they are collected by most of us are commercial perfins even though their status may be considered by some to be governmental (or official) rather than commercial.



Interestingly, in September 1977, Jan Prins, writing in THE PERFIN BULLETIN, was only able to identify the users of eight out of 23 Luxembourg perfin designs. The present listing identifies 29 designs (37 if you include the four foreign and four not yet legitimized perfins mentioned in the preceding paragraph). Of the 29 designs, the users are now known for all but four (**B R**; **G. H.**, **J M**, and **R. W.**).

### The “C” Types

For a perfin pattern to qualify as a “C” or “frequently seen” type, my collection had to contain at least 50 examples of the pattern. I obtained the following counts: **W. L.** (187); **S. D.** (129); **D. L.** (106), **H a** (102); and **AR BE D ES CH** (50). These five “C” types comprise about 77% of the Luxembourg perfins that I have found. You will surely find “C” types without too much searching. They were used primarily by the iron mining companies. They include the compound perfin (**AR BE D ES CH**) of the ARBED in Esch-sur-Alzette, the **D.L** of the German-Luxembourgish Bergwerks in Differdange, the **H a** (with the 12-hole “a”) used by HADIR in Differdange, and the **S.D.** used by the Stahlwerk Düdelingen (which was part of the ARBED in Dudelange). The other “C” type, **W. L.**, and perhaps the most common Luxembourg perfin was used by the Werling & Lambert Bank in Luxembourg-Ville for about 35 years.

### The “B” Types

The “B” or “occasionally seen” types also can be found. I am always happy to add more of these to my collection since they are markedly more difficult to find than the “C” types. I have included in this class those nine Luxembourg perfins for which I had from five to 50 examples. These are: **W. E.** (41); **C L** [as a monogram] (28); **A. D.** (26); the Caisse d’Epargne **design perfin** (21); **C L** [6-hole and 7-hole] (14); **N I Z I** (14); **S O** (13) and **B. W.** (7). They comprise 22% of my collection.

### The “A” Types

In addition, there are at least 15 “A” or scarce types—so classified because each was represented by less than five examples in my collection (if any!). If you find one, you’ve found a jewel for your collection. Of these, after forty years I still lack nine: **A M**, **C A**, **F. F.**, **G.H.**, **H L**, **J.S. & Co.**, the **two P.L.** patterns, and **R. W.** My collection does contain **B R** on the 30¢ first Charlotte series (postmarked Esch-sur-Alzette), **E. H.** on the 10¢ Marie-Adelaide; **F.L.** on the 12¢ Adolphe, the 10¢ William IV (cancelled Wiltz, 1909) and the 12¢ William IV; **G B** on the 10¢ Marie-Adélaïde, and on the 10¢ and 30¢ first Charlotte series, and **H a** with the 11-hole “a” on the 10¢ Marie-Adélaïde. It also contains the **J M** perfin on a 10¢ 1882 Allegory definitive postmarked Luxembourg-Ville, shown below, which is a design that was only discovered recently and of which to my knowledge just three examples have been reported. Some of the “A” types have appeared in recent eBay auctions, realizing as much as \$50.00 each. That’s not too bad for a common definitive full of holes!



J M (only ~ three examples known)

**Table 1 - Recapitulation**

15 "A" Types ( $< 5$ )	9 "B" Types (5-50)		5 "C" Types ( $\geq 50$ )
A M	A. D.		AR BE D ES CH
B R	B. W.		D. L.
C A (monogram)	C L (monogram)		H a (12-hole "a")
E. H.	C L	"L" with 6 holes	S. D.
		"L" with 7 holes	
F. F.	N I Z I		W. L.
F.L.	S O (monogram)		
G B	W. E.		
G. H.	* (7-hole star design)		
H a (11-hole "a")			
H L			
J M			
J. S. & Co.			
P.L. .	9-hole "L"		
	11-hole "L"		
R.W.			

Check your own collection. Let me know if you think I have mistakenly categorized the scarcity of any of these perfin designs, and be sure to report any commercial perfins not included in Table 2.



**Table 2 - Listing of Luxembourg Perfins**

[Scarcity Code: **A** (seldom or rarely seen), **B** (occasionally seen), **C** (frequently seen)]

Number of Holes (Per Part)	Perfin Pattern	User	Approximate Dates of Use		Scarcity Code
15/1/17/1	<b>A . D . *</b> *Sometimes found incomplete, with two holes missing at the top of the "D."	ARBED DOMMELDINGEN Vereinigte Hüttenwerke Burbach-Eich-Düdelingen Werk Dommeldingen	1900-1948		<b>B</b>
10/15	<b>A M</b>	ARBED MINES Vereinigte Hüttenwerke Burbach-Eich-Düdelingen Esch-sur-Alzette	1917-1940		<b>A</b>
14/17/19/15/17/ 15/16/14/16	<b>AR BE D ES CH</b>	ARBED ESCH Vereinigte Hüttenwerke Burbach-Eich-Düdelingen Werk Esch	1922-1940		<b>C</b>
19/17	<b>B R</b>	? [My example is postmarked Esch-sur- Alzette in 1928]	?		<b>A</b>
18/1/23/1	<b>B . W .</b>	BRASSEUR & WAGENER Dommeldingen	1907-1916		<b>B</b>
31 (total)	<b>C A</b> (monogram)	CRÉDIT ANVERSOIS Luxembourg	1904-1916		<b>A</b>
7	<b>*</b> (7-hole design)	CAISSE D'ÉPARGNE et CRÉDIT FONCIER Luxembourg	1905-1927		<b>B</b>
7/7	<b>C C</b>	?	1909-1946		<b>Not Classified</b>
23/10	<b>C L</b> (monogram)	COLUMETA Comptoir métallurgique luxembourgeois, S.A. Luxembourg-Place de Paris	1918-1930		<b>B</b>
7/4	<b>C L</b> (spread wide)	?	?		<b>Not Classified</b>
10/6	<b>C L</b>	CRÉDIT LYONNAIS Luxembourg	6-hole L	1923-1939	<b>B</b>
10/7			7-hole L	1921-1940	<b>B</b>

19/1/15/1	D . L .	DEUTSCH- LUXEMBURGISCHE Bergwerks und Hütten- Aktiengesellschaft, Differdingen	1900-1930		C
11/1/13/1	E . H .	ÉGIDE HERCKMANS Épicerie & Denrées colonial en gros, Ettelbrück	1917-1919		A
18/1/18/1	F . F .	FISCHER-FERRON Fourrures et Confection, Luxembourg - Grand Rue	1906-1907		A
12/1/11/1	F . L .	F. LAMBERT S.A. Fabrique de cuir "IDEAL," Anct. F. Lambert Wiltz	1909-1922		A
13/19	G B	GEMEN & BOURG Rosiéristes, Luxembourg-Limpertsberg	1916-1922		A
16/1/16/1	G . H .	?	1900-1907		A
16/11	H a	HADIR Hauts Fourneaux et Aciéries, Differdange, St. Ingbert, Rumelange. Division de Differdange	11-hole A	1919- 1920	A
16/12			12-hole A	1910- 1940	C
24/26	H L	HORTULUX Ets. d'Horticulture, Bofferdange	1917-1931		A
9/17	J M	? [Reported postmarked Vianden]	?		A
11/1/15/1/14/12/12	J . S . & Co	JULES SICHEL & Cie Fers et métaux en gros, Luxembourg-Gare et Esch-sur-Alzette	1910		A
7/1/9/1	J . V .	JULES VERBERCKT 20, rue des Sables - Bruxelles	?		Foreign
6/17	J W	JULES WAUCQUEZ & Cie Draperies 65, rue des Tanneurs Bruxelles	?		Foreign
7	L	?	?		Not Classifie d
16/8/9/7/6/10	N e s t l é	NESTLÉ Süßwaren-Hersteller Schweiz	1928		Foreign
13/5/9/5	N I Z I	NICOLAS ZIMMER Matériaux de construction, Luxemburg	1921-1933		B

12/1/9/1	<b>P . L .</b> (small "P")	PRISON LUXEMBOURG 28, rue Munster Luxemburg-Grund	9-hole L	1894- 1912	<b>A</b>
14/1/11/1	<b>P . L .</b> (large "P")		11-hole L	1910- 1941	<b>A</b>
17/1/25/1	<b>R . W .</b>	?	?		<b>A</b>
10/1/11/1	<b>S . D .</b>	STAHLWERK DÜDELINGEN Vereinigte Hüttenwerke Burbach-Eich-Düdelingen Werk Düdelingen	1887-1943		<b>C</b>
40	<b>S O</b> (design)	SOGECO Société Générale pour la Commerce de Produits-Industriels, 3-5 Place Joseph II, Luxembourg	1918-1930		<b>B</b>
7	<b>V</b>	?	1945		<b>Not classified</b>
9/1/10/1/8	<b>V . O . C.</b>	G. A. GARRAT (Vacuum Oil Company) B.P. No. 613 Bruxelles-Centre	?		<b>Foreign</b>
25/15/1	<b>W E .</b>	WERK ESCH Vereinigte Hüttenwerke Burbach-Eich-Düdelingen Werk Esch/ Alzig	1914-1930		<b>C</b>
17/1/9/1	<b>W . L .</b>	WERLING LAMBERT & Co. Bankhaus Luxemburg	1892-1926		<b>C</b>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>"*Essai de classification des perforations sur timbres-poste du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*," LE MONITEUR DU COLLECTIONNEUR (5/1991), pp. 221-226 and earlier articles cited therein.

<sup>2</sup>The FSPL catalog is available from the Federation's Commission d'Études at its Web site:

<http://www.philatelie.lu/commetude/>

The address of the FSPL is Foyer de la Philatélie, 38 rue du Curé, L-1368 Luxembourg-Ville. I would urge collectors of Luxembourg perfins to order the FSPL catalog. The perfin patterns are illustrated in the catalog and a listing is provided for each perfin of every Luxembourg stamp on which it has been reported. A checklist form is provided for each perfin design to enable the collector to record the earliest and latest dates of use he or she has found. The introductory sections of the catalog (written in parallel French and German) provide an interesting history of worldwide perfin use, depict perforators, explain the different orientations in which perfins can be found, and illustrate Luxembourg perfin varieties, including multiple and incomplete impressions. A bibliography lists the significant amount of research on Luxembourg perfins that has appeared during the more than 25 years since Prins published his listing.